(c) The Department of Telecommunications has taken various steps to eradicate problems faced by the subscribers and to minimise the instances of inflated bills which are as under:—

(i) Efforts are being made through implemenation of the successive plans to upgrade the existing facilities by incorporating new technologies.

(ii) Replacement of life-expired underground cables by new cable.

(iii) Introduction of computerisation of services.

(iv) Rehabilitation and upgradation of the external plant.

(v) Provision of dynamic STD locking facility to customers of electronic exchanges.

(vi) Surprise checks by vigilance.

(vii) Locking of D.Ps, Cabinets, Pillars and other vulnerable points.

(viii) Strict disciplnary action against employees found involved; and

(ix) Computerisation of telephone billing.

(d) For(i) and (ii) of part (b), the Department of Telecommunications is inducting only latest state of art digital electronic exchange. For (iii) of part (b), mostly radio based latest systems are being planned.

Noticeable improvelent in service is expected when the telecom. network becomes fully electronic and the external plant is fully upgraded.

Awarding the contract for cellular phones

1240. DR. BAPU KALDATE: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the contract for cellular phones has been granted to a firm, in violation of the norms and rules in this regard;

(b) if so, what are the reasons therefor;

(c) whether it is a fact that the Delhi High Court and the Supreme Court had passed adverse remarks in this connections:

(d) if so, what are the circumstances under which the remarks of the High Court and the Supreme Court were ignored in awarding the contract: and

(e) what procedure was followed by Government in awarding the contract for cellular phones?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI SUKH RAM): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) and (d) No Sir, the criteria of evaluation laid down by the Department of Telecom has been examined in detail and uphold by the Hon'ble High Court of Delhi and the Hon'ble Supreme Court. The orders given by the courts were duly impemented while awarding the contracts.

(e) The tenders were evaluated in two stages. In the first stage the bidders were shortlisted based on eligibility, commercial and technical conditions. In the second stage the financial bids of the shortlisted bidders were evaluated.

Transfer of licence for Cellular Mobile phone service in Delhi

1241. SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Cellular Mobile Services licence issued for Delhi to Sterling Computers is proposed to be transferred to ESSAR Group.

(b) if so, the terms and conditions of such transfer: and

(c) whether it has been brought to the notice of the Ministry that ESSAR

have taken over Sterling Computers including the licence for the Cellular Mobile Services, with a view to circumventing the prohibition on transfer of such licence?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI SUKH RAM): (a) No Sir, the licence for cellular mobile service in Delhi was issued to M/s Sterling Cellular Ltd. and it is not transferable.

(b) Does not arise in view of (a).

(c) There is no request from the licence i.e. M/s. Sterling Cellular Ltd. for any transfer of licence or selling the equity to M/s Essar. However, some press reports regarding M/s. Essar acquiring a stake in Sterling Computer who is one of the promoters in Sterling Cellular have come to the notice of the Government.

Adequate orders for ITI

1242. SHRI B. K. HARI PRASAD: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Indian Telephone industries Limited, after consistently excellent performance since its inception, has stared faltering by posting a first time loss in the first half of the current financial year;

(b) whether this is due to under utilisation of ITI's capacity in the face of stiff competition from MNCs now operating in Indian telecom sector;

(c) whether the Department of Telecommunications would ensure placement of adequate orders on ITI for switching equipment to keep its capacity fully utilised; and

(d) whether Government would allow the required time frame to ITI to put its new plans into operation, including State-of-the-art equipment for satellite communication and thereby provided a level playing field?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI SUKH RAM): (a) No, Sir. So far as loss in the first half of the year is concerned ITI Ltd. had posted a loss of about Rs. 17 crores during the first half of 1993-94 also.

(b) Losses during the first half of the year are due to several factors including the main aspect of general fall in price of the Telecom Equipments.

(c) and (d) With a view to utilise the capacities of its own PSEs i.e. ITI and HTL optimally as also to keep these PSEs commercially viable, DOT is following a policy under which 25 to 35 per cent of the DOT orders, are kept reserved for these PSEs, taken together, for the items which they manufacture. This policy is without any compromise in respect of price, quality and supply schedule. Timely formulation and implementation of IT plans is the basic responsibility of IT management. Providing a 'level playing field' to PSEs is a continuing process and Government keep on taking necessary steps as and when a need arises.

Pilot project for basic telephone service in Tamil Nadu

1243. SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a pilot project has been approved for M/s. US West India providing basic telephone services in selected areas of Tamil Nadu.

(b) if so, the basis and rationale for such approval when DOT is simultaneously inviting proposals on open tender basis for similar services all-over India including Tamil Nadu.

(c) whether the DOT proposes to grant further pilot projects to other foreign companies as well and if so, the terms and conditions thereof;